GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1681
ANSWERED ON:02.08.2000
OPERATION OF TOUTS IN RPO, AHMEDABAD
SURESH RAMRAO JADHAV (PATIL)

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether hassled passport applicants are turning to touts in Regional Passport Office, Ahmedabad;

(b) if so, whether fake passports as well as unaccounted cash were obtained from the cupboards of the employees following CBI raids over there;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) the number of touts found operating from the premises of the RPO, Ahmedabad; and

(e) the steps taken/proposed to be taken for smooth running of the RPO, Ahmedabad?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA)

a) No, Sir. However, some applicants were using some travel agents to submit forged documents with the passport application.

b) As per the preliminary enquiry report, no fake passports or unaccounted cash were recovered during the CBI raid on 30th June 2000 at the RPO, Ahmedabad.

c) Does not arise.

d) Two touts were taken into custody. Around fifty travel agents were reported to be submitting applications on behalf of applicants at RPO, Ahmedabad.

e) Government is addressing the root cause of the problems at the Passport Offices to streamline the issue of passports and eliminate the reasons for malpractices. Government have already adopted several measures which, inter alia, include - increasing the availability of application forms by allowing printing, distribution and sale at nominal cost of passport forms by approved private printers; establishing 20 Passport Application Collection Centres to accept passport applications, in addition to the existing 28 Passport Offices; computerising processing procedures in 20 of the 28 Passport Offices; launch of the Central Passport Organisation website; holding of Passport Adalats etc. A `Tatkaal` Scheme of issue of out-of-turn passports to eligible applicants has been launched and machine-writing of passport booklets at the Regional Passport Office, Delhi has been started. These measures are designed to reduce delays and pendencies.

At Regional Passport Office, Ahmedabad, besides exercising greater vigilance,restrictions have been placed on the submission of applications by the travel agents. Passports granted on overdue or post-police verification basis have been restricted. Four officials of the Regional Passport Office, Ahmedabad have been suspended.